

### [The Arizona Republic](#)

- 500 A.D. to 1450 A.D.: Hohokam Indians created an extensive canal system in the Salt River. One of their oldest canals, later named Indian Bend Pump Ditch, is located in Rio Salado Park near the Tempe archeological site "Loma del Rio."
- 1700: Father Eusebio Kino, a Jesuit missionary, named the river "Rio Salado" (Spanish for Salt River) because the fresh water had a salty taste.
- 1800s: Salt River still flows freely.
- 1870s: Charles T. Hayden builds the Hayden Flour Mill in Tempe and uses river water to power it.
- 1887: Phoenix and Maricopa Railroad build bridge crossing Salt River near Ash Avenue. Floodwaters washed it away in 1891. Second bridge washed away in 1905. The present bridge at this site was built by the Arizona Eastern in 1912 and stands today.
- 1904: Dam construction begins on the Salt River. Former President Theodore Roosevelt dedicated Roosevelt Dam in 1911.

- 1930s: People gathered at Tempe Beach Park, which was built in 1931, and would swim in the river. Red Harkins of "Harkins Theatres" built a theater at the park where he showed summer movies for five cents.
- 1931: Mill Avenue Bridge is built.
- 1949: First man-made lake is built in Tempe's section of Salt River. The "Lakeside Amusement Park," included a 10-acre, four-foot-deep lake that was to have fishing, carnival rides and boating. After a problem with seepage, the lake was thought to have dried up by 1950.
- 1950 to 1970s: Dry river bed is used as landfill, for quarry mining and industrial businesses.
- 1966: Arizona State University students design the "Rio Salado Project," which includes a plan that would fill the Salt River with water from end-to-end.
- 1969: ASU expanded the project, integrating business, community and government agencies. The Valley Forward Association and the Maricopa Association of Governments support the project.
- 1970s: Studies and designs of Rio Salado plan shift from including the metropolitan Phoenix area to about 30 miles of green belts connecting with a series of lakes and streams. By the late 1970s the Army Corps of Engineers, ASU and Phoenix Urban Study have contributed to the design. One plan identified locations for three large urban lakes in the Valley.

- 1979: Former Tempe Mayor Harry Mitchell formed the Tempe Rio Salado Citizen Advisory Commission to provide feedback on the project.
- 1970s and 1980s: extensive flooding caused bridge failures, property damage and loss of life, emphasizing the need for a Rio Salado flood-control plan. The Rio Salado Development District formed and began developing a Rio Salado Project for the area from Granite Reef to Agua Fria within the 100 year flood plain.
- 1987: Maricopa County voters turned down a property tax and bonds to finance the \$2.56 billion Rio Salado Project. Tempe moves forward alone to redevelop its portion of the Salt River.
- By 1989: Tempe had adopted the Rio Salado Master Plan. Studies of water quality and usage began, as did coordination with numerous state and federal agencies. The City Council adopted General Plan 2000, incorporating the Rio Salado Park Plan. A groundbreaking ceremony near Tempe Beach Park marked the beginning of the construction of the river channelization. Maricopa County Flood Control and Arizona Department of Transportation would eventually pay an estimated \$40 million for channelization of the river bed.
- 1990: The Rio Salado Master Plan showed a Town Lake concept with a body of water between the north and south shores. Previously, the lake concept included islands but that concept was modified to allow the river to flow through the channel.
- 1995: A one-mile bike path along the south bank of the river between Mill Avenue and Rural Road is built. Town Lake design report begins and another financial study and landscape designs for parks is completed.
- 1996: Construction on the Town Lake North Bank Linear Park begins.

- 1996: Tempe completed a lake capacity needs study and started a lake management plan. City staff and consulting engineers visited inflatable dam locations in Japan.
- 1997: Former Gov. Fife Symington signed legislation that excluded lake and infrastructure projects associated with the lake from contracting state and city sales tax. Town Lake groundbreaking ceremony hosted. Tempe would use bonds to pay for the construction of the \$45 million lake.
- June 2, 1999: Water from the Central Arizona Project started flowing into Town Lake; by July 14, lake was officially full.
- Nov. 6, 1999: 35,000 people gathered for the Tempe Town Lake Festival, which featured the lake dedication, opening of the remodeled Tempe Beach Park, music on three stages and fireworks.
- July 4, 2000: more than 125,000 visitors celebrated Independence Day with a fireworks display at Town Lake.
- 2002: COX Splash Playground at Tempe Beach Park opened. Arizona Game and Fish stocked Town Lake with about 5,000 rainbow trout.
- 2004: SRP Town Lake Marina opens on the north side of the lake, providing storage for boats, rowing shells and kayaks. The Indian Bend Wash Habitat from Town Lake's east dam to McKellips Road was completed. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and Tempe partner to restore portions of the Salt riverbed to their natural state, creating a wildlife habitat.

- 2006: Construction of the Valley Metro Light Rail Bridge across Town Lake was completed.
- 2007: Tempe Center for the Arts opened.
- 2009: The Rio Salado multi-use path from Priest Drive to Hardy Drive opened.

**More notable Rio Salado/Town Lake moments:** [www.tempe.gov/lake/LakeHistory/timlin.htm](http://www.tempe.gov/lake/LakeHistory/timlin.htm)

**Information on the lake and its recreational activities:** [www.tempe.gov/lake/](http://www.tempe.gov/lake/)